

Adoption is a wonderful way to build a family



People who adopt are very special. They have a strong belief that all children deserve a family to call their own. They have open hearts and are able to take children not born to them into their homes to love them as their own. The majority of parents who have adopted speak of it as a challenging and exciting way to build a family.

Adoptive families often speak of the great rewards they have received from the relationships formed through adoption. As rewarding as adoption is, it also is a serious commitment. Please call 1-888-736-2820 for more information.



Make the Difference of a Lifetime

Division of Children and Family Services

Adoption is a lifelong commitment

Prospective adoptive families need to have a clear understanding of the reasons they wish to adopt in order to decide if adoption is right for them.

Families need to understand their strengths and limitations and know if they are capable of meeting the challenges adoption brings. Families considering adoption will be asking many questions, and the following may be helpful:

- Am I comfortable having someone new added to my family?
- Will my children and relatives be supportive of my adoption plans?
- Am I a flexible person who can deal with change and stress?
- Am I willing to be an advocate to obtain necessary medical, mental health, and school services?
- If married, do we work as a team and are we both equally committed to adoption?
- Do I have enough time to meet the needs of a child?

People who adopt are people who enjoy parenting. They feel that family is important and that giving a child a permanent family is extremely important. Successful adoptive parents can:



1. Commit to the child.
2. Provide a safe, structured environment. (Children who have been abused or neglected need the predictability of structure, routine, and consistent expectations.)
3. Accept a child's differences. (These children often find it

difficult to trust adults; they develop survival behaviors in order to cope.)

4. Separate the child from the behavior. (Learn to love the child even when behavior is challenging.)

5. Deal with rejection. (These children often fear rejection and may deal with their feelings by rejecting you first. You must be able to avoid taking their words or behavior personally.)

6. Look at a child's progress in small steps.

7. Accept your own feelings of frustration. (All

parents become frustrated with children at times.)

8. Participate in a parent support group, as needed.

9. Learn new parenting techniques, as needed.

10. Handle stress and change.

11. Advocate for the child's needs.

12. Possess a sense of humor.

Who are the children awaiting adoption?

The Department of Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services (DHS/DCFS), is dedicated to finding families for the following children:

- Caucasian children age nine years or older
- African American children age two years or older
- Sibling groups of two or more African American children or three or more Caucasian children seeking a home together
- Children with a serious emotional, physical, medical, or mental condition

Many of these children are removed from their birth families due to abuse, neglect, and/or abandonment.

Children awaiting adoption may have trouble trusting others, have low self-esteem, poor peer

relationships, defiance, learning disabilities, impulsive behaviors, aggressiveness, and attachment disorders.

It is important to learn about these difficulties and to learn how best to handle them. It is often helpful for prospective adoptive parents to seek advice from others who have adopted and from professionals who are knowledgeable about concerns families face.

Who can adopt?

Prospective adoptive parents may be single, married, or divorced. Adoptive parents can be childless or already parenting other children. Individuals may adopt a child who is racially different from themselves. You certainly do not have to be wealthy or own your own home to adopt.

One of the most important factors that will determine adoptive parent eligibility is the ability of prospective adoptive parents to provide the child with permanence in a safe and stable environment where the child can be part of a family.

You must be at least 21 years old to 55 years old. If you are married, you will need to have been married for at least two years before you are eligible to adopt. However, depending on the child's needs and other family considerations, exceptions may be made.

Where are the children who wait?

DHS/DCFS has custody and power to consent to the adoption of children who have a case plan goal of adoption. Most of these children are living in foster homes. Others may be in group homes or treatment centers.

Some of these children have experienced multiple moves within the child welfare system and while living with their birth families. A few have experienced an adoption that did not work.

These children need a safe, loving, permanent home in which they can begin to build trust with a caring, committed family.

What is involved in the adoption process?

Every prospective adoptive family receives training and must have an adoption assessment that is conducted in the home by an adoption specialist. You will be asked to think about your parenting style, your own life experiences, your expectations for a child, the reason you want to adopt, and your ability to adjust your family's lifestyle for a new family member.

You will be asked to provide forms and statements, such as a marriage certificate and divorce decree, health evaluations, personal references, child abuse/neglect registry check, and criminal records checks.

After the assessment is completed, you will be considered for the placement of a child. The wait for a child can be as short as six to 12 months; however, it can take longer.

When you are selected for a child, you will receive written information about the child and usually a photograph. This information will help you decide whether this child is right for you. You will get to visit the child.

After a child has been placed, an adoption specialist will help you with any questions and problems. The adoption specialist can provide you with information on resources that may be needed.

How much does adoption cost?

DHS/DCFS does not charge a fee to adopt a child. You will be responsible for paying the costs of the medical examination for all persons living in your household. If required, you will pay the costs of the federal criminal record check for each adult applicant.

A DHS attorney will be provided at no charge to





process most adoptions. If you cannot afford the court costs to finalize the adoption, financial assistance may be available after you adopt a waiting child.

Is financial assistance available?

Financial assistance may be available in the form of monthly support to the child, one-time reimbursement for expenses related to initial adoption expenses, and a federal tax credit for the year when the adoption occurs.

The monthly support, called adoption subsidy, is available for children who meet eligibility requirements. A subsidy helps to meet the costs of providing for the child's daily needs. Subsidies may be available to help pay for medical or psychological services and legal fees to finalize an adoption. Subsidy agreements must be signed prior to the finalization of the adoption. You may want to find out if your employer offers benefits for adoption. An adoption specialist will provide you with more detailed information on the types of financial assistance that are available.

How long does it take to complete an adoption?

After a child has lived with a family for at least six months, the recommendation for finalization of the adoption can occur. If the court accepts the recommendation, the court will order the adoption finalized. There will be a final adoption decree which names you as the parent.

A final note

Adoption is an important commitment to a child who needs you. We are committed to helping make the adoption experience a special one for you and your family.

The DHS/DCFS adoption specialist can provide you with more information about the children and about the adoption process. The adoption specialist has a photo-listing of children with special needs waiting for an adoptive family. The photo-listing contains photographs of the children, as well as child-specific information. If you would like to view the photo-listing or to talk with an adoption specialist, please contact the Adoption Services Unit at 1-888-736-2820 or (501) 682-8462.

We will put you in touch with the adoption specialist in your area. Or, you can call your local DHS/DCFS county office and ask to speak to the adoption specialist. Information also is available on-line at www.state.ar.us/dhs

